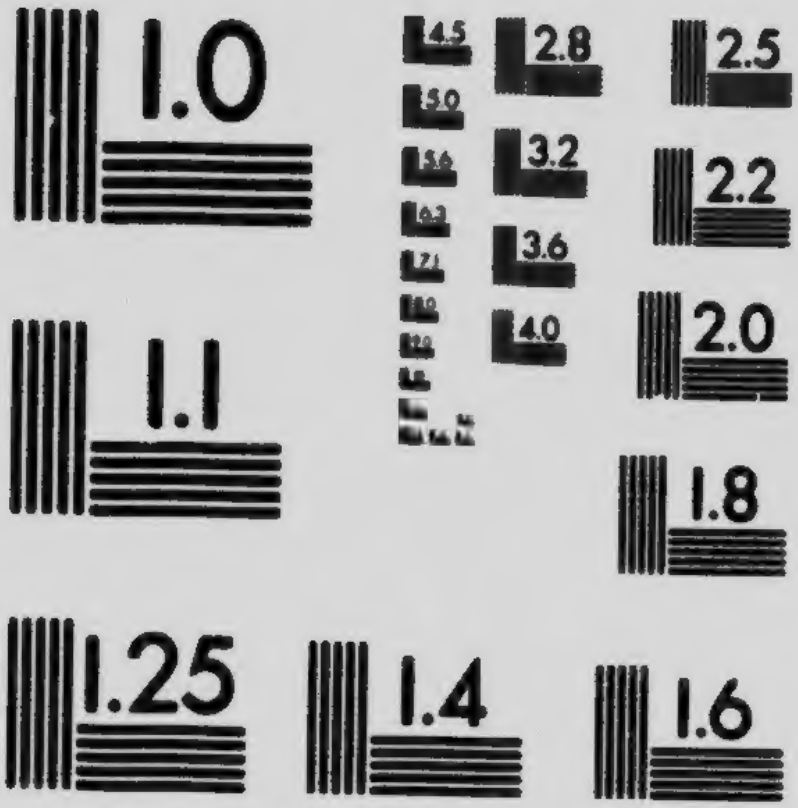

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

THE

Alpine Club of Canada

GREETING

By Sir Edmund Walker, C.V.O.

PRINTED BY
STOVEL COMPANY LIMITED
WINNIPEG

RB151, 998

GREETING

By Sir Edmund Walker

I have been *directed* (that being, I suppose, the right word to use when the most potent influence in the Alpine Club issues a decree) to write an article for the Alpine Journal. As I am not a writer and know practically nothing about alpine climbing this is, like the ascent of certain mountains, a tall order. Before I begin, however, I wish to express my pride as well as my surprise at being elected Honorary President of the Club, to fill the place of one of the greatest of Canadians, the late Sir Sandford Fleming, K.C.M.G. Although I am not a climber. it has been a keen pleasure to me for many years to be a member of the Club, and no worshipper from a safe distance has more deeply admired its many feats, its climbing, its scientific work, its glorious photographs, its camp life and good fellowship and all the other delightful evidences of what may be enjoyed "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," and if I can serve the Club in any other way than by ascending mountains, I am at its command.

I have never doubted the usefulness of the Alpine Club, nor can I quite understand the attitude of those who regard it merely as an association of men and women bent solely on the gratification of their own pleasure, although, even if there were no loftier motives involved, the Club would still rank high among human institutions. We call ourselves a civilized community, but we still know so little about our own country that the exploration and description of our mountains constitute in themselves a great addition to our knowledge and when such descriptions are accompanied by a wealth of photographs, not only of exquisite art as photographs, but portraying objects beautiful, grand,

seductive, terrifying, revealing, indeed, the wonders of our mountains in every phase discoverable to the ardent members of the Club. how can we hesitate to praise? It may be said that we might have all this from enthusiasts who have no real knowledge of mountains, except the art of climbing them, and little perception of beauty beyond what the camera can discover. The Alpine Club, however, has earned most positive distinction by the scientific knowledge its members have displayed in geology and physical geography, in topography and cartography and in the study of the flora and fauna of our western mountains. Canada owes so much to the Club in these respects that I may be excused for urging strongly that its claims to public recognition be more generally acknowledged.

The members of the Club have not in their enthusiastic devotion to its objects, forgotten their duty to the Empire at this grave moment. The last copy of the Journal shows that 89 members of the Club are on active service, a very large proportion, indeed, of our membership. Of these we have lost seven, while sixteen have been wounded and two are prisoners. Eight have been mentioned in despatches, one of them twice and another four times. Six have won the Military Cross, four the D.S.O., one the C.M.G., two the Cross of the Legion of Honour and one the Croix de Guerre. I do not personally know many of those who have gone to the front, but I have been intimately connected with our Vice-President, Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Mitchell, who has received so many honours—he, I believe, occupies a high military position at the present time never before occupied by a non-professional soldier. There are many splendid records of corporations, clubs and other bodies in Canada, but there are none, I fancy, relatively finer than that of the Alpine Club.

When we write without personal experience about things which others have seen or done, our comments

are apt to smell of the lamp. Like most Britons, I have enjoyed a visit to the one locality in which nature, aided somewhat by man, has arranged a beautiful series of mountains on a scale suitable to man's vision and man's legs: I mean, of course, the Lake Country of England. I have crossed the Alps on my way to and from Italy; I have viewed the vast cordilleran area of North America from transcontinental trains; I have seen many mountains in Mexico in a similarly comfortable manner, and I once climbed the slope of Mount Stephen as far as the Cambrian Trilobite beds; but of the more intimate beauty of mountains, I deeply regret that I know nearly nothing, and of the glorious exultation of seeing the world from great windy heights I know only the more timid delights that may be attained on mountains not many thousand feet high. What can I say, therefore, that does not smell of the lamp, writing in midwinter before a comfortable fire, with books and boxes of prints around me? I fear—nothing.

In that dramatic period in the early history of the earth when the cooling of its crust had gone far enough to establish the litnosphere and the corresponding hydrosphere, the elements were already fiercely at work tearing down the high parts of the lithosphere and carrying it by stream and river to the slopes and valleys below the hydrosphere. It is, therefore, not strange that these first mountains are now rarely found as high peaks and that they who live in those areas of the earth's surface that are the most ancient usually have to be content with very moderate altitudes although they are often blessed with the most lovely scenery. At later periods, however, throughout the whole geologic column, the throes of the tired earth have caused gigantic ranges of mountains to be formed, and so it follows that we may have mountains in Western Canada with rocks as old as, or older than, the Cambrian, two or three miles in thickness formed by thousands of feet of sediment without

any vestige of life, being at a horizon below the point where organic remains begin to appear and in another range of mountains, just alongside, we may find only Carboniferous and Devonian rocks, and they, by the curious manner in which the mountains were created, may have been pushed partly on top of the much later Cretaceous of the plains. The last stage of this mountain building is, however, so remote, so far as man is concerned, and the destruction by the elements is so slow, that the mountain, wherever it may be, is our most tremendous phenomenon, our hoariest monument of time, the object sometimes of our worship, sometimes of our fear, always of our admiration, while its counterpart, the abysmal valleys under the ocean, covered with the slime formed from the wastage of the mountains and carried down by the rivers, creates in us little but horror, and a terror-bound sense of mystery.

As a rule, man in his early stages feared and avoided the mountains and where he has found a more or less permanent home among them his ancestors have been driven to live there because of more powerful enemies who have seized the valleys or the plains. Such mountain men are often degenerate, antique in habit, and profoundly different from the ordinary man. True, in time, the valley man sometimes grows fat and lazy and the mountain man, like Kintoki, sometimes acquires all the strength that comes from contact with nature, and her wild beasts, and so many a hill-man coming down upon the vale of Cashmir, upon the fishing Indians of our Pacific coast or upon the lowland Scotchman, has in effect the War-Song of Dinas Vawr—

> "The mountain sheep are sweeter,
> But the valley sheep are fatter;
> We, therefore, deemed it meeter,
> To carry off the latter."

We should be wrong to suppose, however, that men dwelling in the mountain areas have necessarily been

driven there by other men. Sometimes they have, like the plants and lower animals, sought the higher ranges to escape the heat of the plains, sometimes they are the survivors of races that, having always been accustomed to cool or cold climates, cannot exist at the warm levels.

I recall the description of a Canadian missionary who lives in Thibet, the most elevated country in the world, where the valleys are from 12,000 to 17,000 feet above the sea, the passes 16,000 to 19,000 feet and the peaks 20,000 to 25,000 feet. The people whose condition he is seeking to improve, sleep in tents, own no land, dress in skins, have no written language, no form of money, no furniture, are pure nomads, and apparently exist only for the sake of their herds of yaks, the only kind of wealth they care about or understand. These nomads are not very different in the scale of civilization from a certain inhabitant of our country in the scale of biology. On the talus of Sulphur Mountain, Banff, under a stone at an altitude of 6,500 feet, a wingless insect was recently found which is so generalized in structure that it combines the characters of the cockroach, the earwig, the white ant, the cricket and the grasshopper (Grylloblatta campodei-formis Walker).* Like the Thibetan nomad in the "Icy Land" this ancient form of Canadian life, with no near relatives in the ordinary fauna of the world, has survived with little modification in structure since palaeozoic times because its ancestors became adapted to conditions where little competition with other species existed.

To many of us the mountains are associated with loneliness, with that solitude which excludes the world and brings us face to face with our own souls. The great scale of our glaciers, the terribly destructive force of heat and cold and all the other enemies of mountains, the starved life and the vast areas where there seems to

*"Grylloblatta campodei-formis Walker" was discovered by Mr. E. M. Walker, Sir Edmund's son, who is an entomologist of very advanced knowledge. A description was published in the "Canadian Entomologist," Vol. 46, No. 3, March 1914, pp. 93-99.—Editor.

be no life, and finally the enormous number and size of our mountains, make us forget that every mountain is, more or less, an island of the Arctic left in the glacial period and is thus sometimes a refuge for fragile things such as the White Mountain butterfly, which flutters among the rocks close to the ground, and when it settles leans over on one side as if to avoid the wind.

Man in Canada and in the greater part of the United States has shunned the mountains. To him their grandeur and their solitude are associated with the trials of those who first ventured to cross the few passes that were practicable in pre-railroad days. The glimpse of the mountains by Verendrye, the heroism of Mackenzie, the tales of the fur-traders, the discovery of Rogers Pass are remembered by every Canadian, while Americans have their Lewis and Clark, their Pike and others. In Mexico and the southwestern part of the United States, the mountains presented, at all events to the Indian, a different aspect. In Arizona and some neighbouring states man sought safety, as he did in many parts of Asia, by building his home in mountain caves or on mountain shelves backed by cliffs, so that he could keep out the enemy by the simple expedient of hauling up the ladder which constituted his front-door steps. The sufferers on the fever-stricken sea levels of Mexico sought the table-lands for relief and naturally loved the mountains, so that the Aztec turning from the sea to the glorious "Mountain of the Star," which we call Orizaba, could see its perfect cone in the early morning suffused in golden light, or changing with every hour of the day, now crimson, now violet, always present, overpowering, all pervading, and filled with religious awe he prayed to his gods that his spirit might finally rest in the sacred mountain. Ancient Mexicans of all races revered their mountains, built towns at their bases, called them by names significant and often mysterious — not such meaningless names as we often use—and very naturally

worshipped a peak of such surpassing beauty as Orizaba, as the Japanese worship Fujiyama.

The mountain climber, breasting the slope, does not always realize as he notes the rapid changes in flora and fauna that he has been able to pass on a small scale through all the changes which he would find on the level earth by travelling from his temporate or tropical land to the Arctic. Perhaps the best example of this perpendicular range of climate is to be found in Bolivia, where, in the torrid zone, we may meet with every gradation from the tropical heat of the lowlands to the arctic cold of the snow-capped peaks. Here, surrounded by the Andean Cordilleras, of which at least eight peaks are over or about 20,000 feet in height, lies Titicaca, in some respects the most remarkable lake in the world. While it is 12,500 feet above sea level, its maximum depth, 924 feet, is greater than that of any of our great lakes, except Lake Superior. Its area is estimated at from 3,200 to 5,000 square miles, and around this centre of interest there developed a complicated civilization which reached its height before the Aymaras were conquered by the Incas in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. To the Incas the shores of Lake Titicaca became a "holy land" which they regarded as the source of all civilization, and when we compare their skill in weaving, in decorating pottery, in working gold and copper, in sculpture and most noticeably in architecture, with that of the Thibetans, living at about the same height, surrounded by the lore and the art of the most ancient civilization in the Eastern world, and yet remaining mere nomads, little altered in their habits during, perhaps, five or ten thousand years, we can realize the difference between the weak who live in the mountains because their stronger brethren have seized the better *lower* country and the strong who have abandoned the lower and have pushed their way into the better *higher* country.

Let me now turn from my books to my prints and

close this article with a few words about the "Peerless Mountain" which so profoundly influences the poetry, the plastic art and even the religion of those laughing children of the sun, the people of Nippon. They are pleased to believe that at a date equivalent to our 286 B.C. an earthquake by one effort produced the two most beautiful things in the world, Lake Biwa and Fujisan or Fujiyama. As we can readily see these two objects were ever in the mind both of Hokusai and of Hiroshige, and no one can even glance at a collection of objects of Japanese art without seeing that exquisitely simple cone, with its gleaming snow cap, always isolated and remote; and if we look a little more closely we can hardly escape seeing the beautiful lake with the wild geese flying over it, or the sail boats moving on its surface, or the rain, or the moonlight, or avoid fancying that we can hear the bells of the temples sounding across the lake at eventide. Among the countless prints by Hiroshige few are so beautiful as the eight landscapes of Omi, the province in which Lake Biwa is situated. In the earlier work by Hokusai the "Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji" are the most important. There are as a matter of fact forty-six views in the set, of which I am glad to own twenty-six. From these prints one learns that all there is of life and Nature centres round Fujiyama, or at least that life is in no case complete without the peerless mountain. Elsewhere you may find him at the bottom of a saki cup or a tea bowl, or he may be blessing the handle of a tea-pot, his silver form embedded in the bronze, or he may be a tiny image in gold or silver laid into the steel of some sword, or he may shine through the windows in one of Harunobu's love scenes, but to Hokusai he is the sentinel who watches over every aspect of life. In some of his prints, perhaps, we are close to Fuji, and the red mountain in fine weather towers against a deep blue sky, or a storm is raging and the lightning plays round its base; in another across the sea in the huge waves of

which sailors are fighting for their lives, rises in the distance the type of what endures, looking down at man's transitory struggles; in others every phase of Japanese landscape appears, the work of everyday life is going on—sawyers are cutting up great timbers in the woods, men with their puny arms are measuring the girth of a giant cedar, pilgrims are seeking the mountain or some wayside temple, a cooper is making an irrigation tank, oxen are hauling wood, fishermen are casting a net—it matters not, the silent Fuji is there. Man pursues his varied occupations in the temples, in the teahouses, in the houseboat, in the pagodas, in cherry time—he cannot escape the vigilance of Fuji; he may be humorous, as in the picture we sometimes call "The Puff of Wind"; he may be watching the wild birds flying across the sky, as they so often do in Japanese pictures; he may be occupied in guessing the wonderful age of the famous pine tree—it is all one to Fuji. Even when Hokusai in his most impressionistic vein makes earth hang in the shining air and gives to physical things a dream-like beauty which no Western artist has achieved, Fuji in all his massive solidity cannot be ignored—he is there to warn, he is there to encourage, he is there to proclaim the value of beauty, he is there to guard Japan.

With us Nature has been too generous. Man will settle in our valleys and the mountains will be near them in many ways, but with our scientific spirit and our modern efficiency we shall proceed to tear the heart out of the mystery, our mountains will doubtless be placed most accurately on our maps, will be minutely classified as to their geological constituents and as to all phenomena connected with them, but by that time men will have ceased to look for them as a blessing at the bottom of the wine cup and to sigh to be entombed in one of them as a guarantee of life hereafter.